UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/C.3/49/16
14 November 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
THIRD COMMITTEE
Agenda item 100 (c)

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Letter dated 11 November 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information from the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the status and rights of the Bulgarian national minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 100 (c).

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

94-44657 (E) 171194 211194

/...

ANNEX

1. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations circulated a document (A/49/455, dated 29 September 1994), the annex to which is entitled "Situation of the Bulgarian minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia". The said document contains numerous falsehoods about the status and exercise of the rights of the members of the Bulgarian national minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

2. The following information on the status and rights of members of the Bulgarian national minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is intended to rectify the allegations contained in the said document.

Number of members of the Bulgarian national minority

3. According to the last census taken in 1991, 26,922 persons living in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia declared themselves as Bulgarians. They account for 0.2 per cent of the total population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and are the tenth largest minority group by number. Members of the Bulgarian minority live in central Serbia and are concentrated in the municipalities of Bosilegrad (72.9 per cent), Dimitrovgrad (52.5 per cent) and Surdulica (6.2 per cent). The downward trend in the number of the Bulgarian national minority is not the result of an active assimilation, as alleged by the Bulgarian side, but of natural migration for economic and other reasons evident also in other regions of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Accordingly, the allegations concerning the premeditated assimilation policy against members of the Bulgarian minority are untrue.

Representation in government

4. In the Municipal Assembly of Dimitrovgrad 97 per cent of deputies are members of the Bulgarian national minority. The Mayor, Secretary and Chairman of the Executive Board are also members of the Bulgarian national minority. Out of the total number of judges of the Municipal Court, 75 per cent are Bulgarians, including the President of the Court, as well as 66 per cent of the employees of the Police Department, including the Head of the Department, and 89 per cent of general managers in various firms and companies. All deputies of the Municipal Assembly of Bosilegrad are members of the Bulgarian national minority.

5. The allegation concerning the systematic fragmentation of the ethnic Bulgarian municipalities through the administrative and territorial division of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State. The administrative and territorial division is motivated exclusively by rationalization and a more effective functioning of State organs in these regions.

Religious rights

6. As to the protection of the freedom of religion and belief, the Constitution and laws of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including those of the Republic of Serbia, are in full compliance with the international standards in this field. A detailed report on the specific aspects and exercise of religious freedoms and rights was circulated by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as an official document of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (A/49/264-E/1994/113 of 19 July 1994), the annex to which is entitled "Information from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief". As to the allegation in document A/49/455 that "the Bulgarian churches and monasteries ... are in wretched condition, some of them being in ruins", the said report of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (A/49/264-E/1994/113, annex, para. 27) says: "All religious communities, in accordance with the number of believers and their needs, build new and maintain the existing places of worship ... About 100 new Orthodox churches are currently being constructed in the Republic of Serbia ... Through the Republican Administration for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, the Republic of Serbia provides considerable financial assistance for the protection of churches and monasteries and other religious institutions" of religious communities, including the facilities of the Bulgarian religious community.

Education

7. In the municipalities inhabited by Bulgarians, there are four elementary schools in Dimitrovgrad, Bosilegrad, Babusnica and Klisura with 2,210 pupils in separate classes. Instruction in these schools is either bilingual or in Serbian, with elements of the Bulgarian national culture, from the first form to the eighth form, with two classes per week. The bilingual instruction includes a more intensive and detailed teaching of the Bulgarian language and cultural values in the Bulgarian language. In the elementary schools in Dimitrovgrad, 93 per cent of the employees, including its principal, are members of the Bulgarian national minority.

8. Dimitrovgrad and Bosilegrad have two secondary schools with approximately 600 students of Bulgarian nationality; 90 per cent of the employees in the Dimitrovgrad secondary school, including its principal, are Bulgarians. This is also one of the most modern secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia, the purchase of whose equipment was financed from the republican budget (except for 10 per cent from local contributions).

9. The Belgrade Faculty of Philology has a Department for the Bulgarian Language headed by a professor of Bulgarian nationality. Two hundred Bulgarians study in the Republic of Serbia. Accordingly, the allegation that the Bulgarian language has never been studied at universities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is untrue.

Publishing activity and information

10. Publishing activity in the Bulgarian language is carried out through the "Bratstvo" news and publishing agency in Nis, founded in 1959. This agency publishes the newspaper Bratstvo, the children's magazine Drugarce and a magazine for literature, art, scientific and social issues Most, whose editors edit and publish books. Publishing activity in Bulgarian is jointly financed by the competent ministries in amounts not smaller than those earmarked for other national minorities, with the exception of the Hungarian minority, which is more numerous and whose publishing activity is more diversified.

11. The import of books, newspapers and publications from other countries into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is allowed and regulated by separate laws. A breach of these laws is punishable in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as in any other State based on the rule of law, so that the allegation that "local authorities often confiscate Bulgarian newspapers and other publications imported from Bulgaria" is untrue.

12. RTV Serbia, through the Nis Radio Station, broadcasts a 15-minute daily programme in Bulgarian (30 minutes on Sundays), while Belgrade Television has been broadcasting a 15-minute Sunday journal in Bulgarian for the past 17 years. During its last allocation of radio frequencies, the Government of the Republic of Serbia allocated one to the Municipal Assembly of Dimitrovgrad.

13. As regards Bulgaria's reference to the sixth periodic report of the Special Rapporteur for human rights, Mr. T. Mazowiecki (E/CN.4/1994/110, paras. 124 and 125), who incidentally never visited the region inhabited by the Bulgarian national minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is recalled that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia denied the unsubstantiated allegations of Mr. T. Mazowiecki in its comments circulated as an official United Nations document (A/49/273-S/1994/864 of 22 July 1994).

Culture

14. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has a long tradition of maintaining the national culture of the members of the Bulgarian national minority, the aim of which is to preserve their national and cultural identity. Cultural and artistic activity is carried out through the work of the Cultural Centre in Dimitrovgrad and Bosilegrad, with cinemas, libraries and numerous folk, music, reciting and other performing groups. There are also two cultural-artistic societies, Mladost at Bosilegrad with 85 members and Georgi Dimitrov at Dimitrovgrad with 73 members.

15. The Hristo Botev amateur theatre, with 30 members, performs in the Bulgarian language and has been active for 106 years. This prestigious amateur theatre has participated in a number of theatrical events in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Theatre Workshop within this theatre staged several pieces in 1994, including "Borjana", the classic piece of Bulgarian drama, directed by a professional director from Sofia. Accordingly, it is untrue that the theatre in Dimitrovgrad has changed its name, as claimed in the document of the Bulgarian Mission to the United Nations.

16. The City Library in Dimitrovgrad houses 30,000 books in the Bulgarian language and the City Library in Bosilegrad 14,000. Regular activities of these libraries include literature evenings and the promotion of books of Bulgarian authors. The work of all these institutions is subsidized from the Yugoslav Government budget. Accordingly, the allegation contained in the Bulgarian report that the City Library in Dimitrovgrad has been closed down in 1951 is untrue.

17. Cooperation between the cultural institutions of the Bulgarian national minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and relevant cultural institutions in Bulgaria, including exchanges of various cultural manifestations and visits, has a long and rich tradition.

Activities of political parties

18. The Constitution and laws of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia lay down the framework and rules for the registration and activity of political parties, the use of the media, etc., which pertain to all political parties and associations in Yugoslavia without exception, including those of national minorities. Organizations of Yugoslav citizens, members of the Bulgarian national minority, are guaranteed equal democratic rights and opportunities as those of other Yugoslav citizens, and they freely exercise these rights without any restrictions.